



Press Release

Commissioner Dimas' rejection of two GM maize products would undermine the EU's safety assessment process

Brussels, 27 November 2007:

EuropaBio – the EU association for bioindustries stands by the scientific evaluation and the competence of the European Food Safety Authority and protests against the undue political intrusion in the approval system.

EuropaBio commenting on the draft proposals, circulating in the media, purportedly written by DG Environment for Commissioner Dimas, points out that the Commissioner's proposal to reject two Bt (GM) maize products for cultivation which have had positive safety assessments from the European Food Safety Authority runs contrary to the European procedure. In addition the scientific studies cited in these proposals do not support the conclusions drawn by Commissioner Dimas.

According to EU regulations, Commissioner Dimas should have forwarded a proposal for adoption of these products more than two and a half years ago after they received their first positive safety assessments from the EFSA. This was delayed with the excuse that the assessment had not considered adequately the effects on non-target organisms and in November 2006, EFSA looked again at this and concluded that the products were as safe as conventional maize and did not anticipate any unintended effects on non-target organisms.

“Commissioner Dimas is recycling old and already refuted arguments and proposing the rejection of two products that have been comprehensively evaluated by the EFSA, in doing so Commissioner Dimas is attempting to undermine the entire EU safety assessment process across a broad range of innovative activities and products to come,” says Johan Vanhemelrijck, Secretary General EuropaBio.

The draft proposals from Dimas mention “new scientific studies” published since the EFSA assessment and cites the same 11 studies in both the Bt11 (Syngenta) and 1507 (Pioneer Hi-Bred and Dow AgroSciences) proposals. “But ten out of the eleven studies cited in the proposals consider effects that EFSA already considered in its previous assessments including the effects on non-target organisms and as such do not identify any environmental risk with respect to the cultivation of Bt maize in the EU. Moreover, some of the studies actually re-confirm the safety of Bt maize, but strangely they are used to support exactly the contrary,” stated Nathalie Moll, Executive Director of the Green Biotech in Europe Unit at EuropaBio.

The other study cited in the draft proposal contains “methodological flaws and omissions, and presents conclusions not supported by the data” according to a senior group of independent scientists (1).

Moreover, Bt has been used in organic farming for almost 60 years being regarded as environmentally friendly and highly selective.

In 2007, more than 110,000 hectares of similar insect resistant maize was cultivated in eight EU countries, showing a 77% increase compared to last year. Insect resistance such as that provided by Bt gives clear benefits to farmers because it improves yields in infested areas and reduces spraying. Over 40 million tons of maize globally never reach the market because of damage by corn borers. The extent of this loss is equivalent to the entire production of Brazil. Bt corn has built-in protection against corn borers. Once farmers are allowed to grow GM crops, invariably they choose to do so.

EuropaBio urges the Commission to reject the proposal, and to bring forward with urgency a new draft that allows European farmers freedom of choice.

(1) Public Research and Regulation Initiative (PRRI)

http://pubresreg.org/index.php?option=com_smf&Itemid=27&topic=9.0

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About EuropaBio

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